



Where the future is present.

Testimony Submitted to
Education Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

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Co-Chairs Senator Andrea Stillman and Representative Andrew Fleischmann, Vice-Chairs Senator Beth Bye and Representative Douglas McCrory, Ranking Members Senator Toni Boucher and Rep. Tim Ackert, and distinguished members of the Education Committee.

My name is Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto, Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools.

First, let me thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to testify in support of House Bill No. 6622, “An Act Concerning District Partnerships, and for your ongoing support of Hartford Public Schools. Our success over the years is due in great part to the hard work of the members of this committee.

Second, I want to publicly thank Gov. Dannel Malloy and Commissioner Stefan Pryor for their leadership on school reform and commitment to deliver a quality education to every child in Connecticut.

As you know, the pilot program for district-charter partnerships that was authorized by this committee and the legislature in 2008 included the Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport school districts. Hartford Public Schools, however, was the only one of the three to take advantage of the opportunity.

The timing of the legislation was perfect for us. We were in the midst of framing our school reform strategy based on a portfolio district approach and, in so doing, we were interested in attracting research-based, high quality school designs.

That year, we implemented 13 new designs, including our partnership with the Achievement First charter management organization that produced the Achievement First Hartford Academy.

Under the terms of the partnership, Hartford Public Schools provides Achievement First with a physical plant and operational support, including transportation, custodial services, security and meals and, in return, Achievement First provides a high-performing school whose test scores and other pertinent information are incorporated into the district’s performance data.

The partnership has been an incredible success. We have learned greatly from Achievement First on instructional delivery, talent development and, generally, how to operate this type of a school.

“The Hartford Public Schools is the State Capital’s Portfolio District of Excellence”



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Since 2008, the Achievement First Hartford Academy has expanded to include a K-4 elementary school, a grade 5-8 middle grades school and the freshman year of what will grow into a 9-12 high school. The school services 881 Hartford-only resident students, who are chosen through a district-administered lottery.

Most importantly, the Achievement First Hartford Academy has become Hartford's highest performing neighborhood school by far with a school performance index (SPI) of 73.2.

The relationship has been so successful, in fact, that Hartford Public Schools was recently awarded a \$5 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to deepen the collaboration with Achievement First and the Jumo Academy charter school organizations. Our district intends to use the additional funds to further align its existing work to Common Core State Standards and advance college readiness in both district and charter schools.

Getting to this point was no easy task. The school almost failed to open in its first year because the state was unable to fund the seats. We believed so much in this model that we solicited temporary aid from the business and philanthropic community. If House Bill #6622 is not approved, the relationship between Hartford Public Schools and Achievement First will end, thereby leaving nearly 900 students without a school to attend.

Extending district-charter partnerships to include all of the alliance districts creates a very real probability that the performance successes of the Hartford/Achievement First partnership can be replicated across Connecticut in the areas of most need – and in a cost-effective way.

I urge you to approve House Bill No. 6622. You will be taking a major step forward in restoring Connecticut to educational prominence and improving the lives of many students who need it.

